

Bioterrorism

Indiana Department of Homeland Security

Interagency Press Release Bank



Bioterrorism

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Preparing for a Bioterrorist Attack

A bioterrorism attack is the deliberate release of viruses, bacteria or other germs (agents) used to cause illness or death in people, animals or plants. These agents are typically found in nature, but it is possible that they could be changed to increase their ability to cause disease, make them resistant to current medicines or to increase their ability to be spread into the environment. Biological agents can be spread through the air, water or in food. Terrorists may use biological agents because they can be extremely difficult to detect and do not cause illness for several hours to several days. Some bioterrorism agents, like the smallpox virus, can be spread from person to person and some, like anthrax, cannot.

Bioterrorism categories: Alignment needed

Category A:

These high-priority agents include organisms or toxins that pose the highest risk to the public and national security because:

- They can be easily spread or transmitted from person to person.
- They result in high death rates and have the potential for major public health impact.
- They might cause public panic and social disruption.
- They require special action for public health preparedness.

Category B:

These agents are the second highest priority because:

- They are moderately easy to spread.
- They result in moderate illness rates and low death rates.
- They require specific enhancements of CDC's laboratory capacity and enhanced disease monitoring.

Category C:

These third highest priority agents include emerging pathogens that could be engineered for mass spread in the future because:

- They are easily available.
- They are easily produced and spread.
- They have potential for high morbidity and mortality rates and major health impact.

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Make a kit:

- Water—one gallon per person, per day (3-day supply for evacuation, 2-week supply for home)
- Food—nonperishable, easy to prepare items (3-day supply for evacuation, 2-week supply for home)
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio (NOAA Weather Radio, if possible)
- Extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Medications (7-day supply) and medical items
- Multipurpose tool
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items
- Copies of personal documents (medication list and pertinent medical information, proof of address, deed/lease to home, passports, birth certificates, insurance policies)
- Cell phones with chargers
- Family and emergency contact information
- Extra cash
- Emergency blanket
- Map(s) of the area

Remember to include things in your kit for special needs, children, pets and common disasters related to your area.

Create a Disaster Plan

Find out what could happen to you:

- Ask what types of disasters are most likely to happen. Request information on how to prepare for each.
- Learn about your community's warning signals: what they sound like and what you should do when you hear them.
- Ask about animal care after disaster. Animals other than service animals may not be allowed inside emergency shelters.
- Find out how to help elderly or disabled persons, if needed.
- Next, find out about the disaster plans at your workplace, your children's school or daycare center and other places where your family spends time.

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Create a disaster plan:

Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire, severe weather and earthquakes to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.

Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case.

Pick two places to meet:

1. Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.
2. Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Everyone must know the address and phone number.

Complete the checklist:

- Post emergency telephone numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.).
- Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for emergency help.
- Determine the best escape routes from your home. Find two ways out of each room.
- Find the safe spots in your home for each type of disaster.
- Show each family member how and when to turn off the water, gas and electricity at the main switches.
- Check if you have adequate insurance coverage.
- Teach each family member how to use the fire extinguisher and show them where it's kept.
- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms.
- Conduct a home hazard hunt.
- Stock emergency supplies and assemble a disaster supplies kit.
- Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR class.

Practice your plan:

- Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.
- Quiz your kids every six months so they remember what to do.

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- Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills.
- Replace stored water every three months and stored food every six months.
- Test and recharge your fire extinguisher(s) according to manufacturer's instructions.